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INTER PENETRALIA

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It had been suggested that ethical values were to be found in the prescribed readings for the Regents' Examinations in English. The notes that are here written are the minutes of a hurried response to the suggestion, and will be read as they are meant when it is noted that they are no more than "minute drops from off the eaves," indicating what may be found in the three assigned Minor Poems of Milton, in the Selected Poems of Burns as read in the light of the Carlyle *Essay*, and in the Fourth Part of the Golden Treasury. The whole is minute in scope, almost microscopic, and merely of technical interest.

Let it then be asked: (1) What ethical values does the book have? Wherein does it tend to influence toward good conduct in life? (2) What general principles of political conduct does the book set forth? Wherein does it help one to be a better citizen of the United States? (3) What general principles of reverence for life, society, and the world in which we live does the book set forth? How does it make one feel toward what Wordsworth calls "A motion and a spirit that impels all thinking things, all objects of all thought, that rolls through all things?"

MILTON'S MINOR POEMS

L'Allegro: Ethical value may be found in the love of rural things as a refuge of the quiet mind, in the suggested solace of history and philosophy, and in the implied comfort of poetry. The poem teaches one to rely upon himself for support.

A contribution toward citizenship is found in its picture of the educated student fully equipt to take his own strong way of thought, not swayed by changing doctrine.

The world to which it introduces the reader is one of natural objects, the recurrent beauty of which sinks into the ordered mind, and rises in springs of pleasure, circling about the Lord and Maker of all. A society

constituted of such units as Milton here portrayed, could solve its own social difficulties.

Il Penseroso: Ethical value may be found in a philosophy similar to that described above, broadened by the admission of its fitness for characters widely different and various.

The political contribution is, like that of the companion poem, emphasized by repetition.

The principle of reverence for immaterial objects is expressed, as for the truths hidden in pagan sources, and for the contemplative outlook on life. Incitements to deep study and appreciation of one's own self and native riches point the way to standards other than those of riches and public reputation. To the Miltonic man life is in equipoise.

Comus: In *Comus* ethical values fall on one another, standards for men and women. Woman is taught the one secure defence of her supreme position, her charm and her reward. While she is true to this, she saves man, both by returning to her brothers as virgin as she left them, and by confuting nobly, and perhaps to salvation, the mad tempter, reveler, and sophist. The Puritan preaches a direct moral sermon, nobly uttered and well remembered.

The first task for the citizen may be rectitude in the relations of sex; the next may be self-management in his differences with his fellows, here symbolized by the controversy of the two brothers; a third, to draw the sword against the ruffian element. Through these ideas runs the counter idea that all the story is a drama of the single soul, which has its virtue, its debate, its effective movement against wrong, in the spiritual realm within. And here the ethical values react on the civic elements. The call is strong to the fight that never dies, the everlasting combat of the Right against the forces of Evil.

The poem is long enough and is composed of literary movements sufficiently intricate to be a challenge to achievement in whatever fine mode of the country's work the reader is skilled. Definite religious principles of a general character occur in positive mention; the sense of aesthetic beauty grows with the poem; and every "high and leafy place," the forest refuge of a thousand holidays, becomes immanent with the presence of the God of Nature.

BURNS'S POEMS AND THE CARLYLE "ESSAY"

Burns's Poems: In many of his poems Burns lives with the *ethos* of his race rather than with his own, or with his own by an ownership of tears. There is reverence for God, perception of the good in even debased man, sense of the ideal in woman. Burns hates a sham, and he hates it vehemently, as vigorously rebelling against it as it has force with its supple hypocrisy to injure Burns's friends, the men of simple heart, who, rich only in the

common attributes of all men, are voiceless mutes when Burns passes on from them to the nooks of daisies and the river sward of Afton. In such themes, seek values. The works are greater than the man.

The political man of Burns is above the law and, impressive with personality, his presence and development precede the institution. The rank that follows the institution is but the guinea's stamp; "the man's the gowd for a' that."

Influence to general well living is felt in the product of a ploughman's verse, in the dereliction of Burns's life, in the breaking-in of the ideal on the drab of such an existence as was Burns's, and in the presence of so pure a flame in so frail a vessel.

Carlyle's "Essay": Carlyle in his *Essay* emphasizes these points, and calls for our sympathetic understanding of a nature perhaps remote from our own. He deprecates rash judgment. He laments that ill way of life that destroyed prematurely so fine a brain, made silent so persuasive a tongue.

Comparison of Carlyle's own life with this essay teaches again the caution necessary against neglecting a message from a mortal because we may be conscious of defect in the messenger. He brings to us the possibility of fine sympathy between beings of a nature as different as his own and that of Burns. His patriotic claims for his Scottish hero tell of the ties of blood stronger than the bond of a pretended universal philanthropy.

Both these men serve to strengthen the individual in his struggle against the mass, stand for the man against the machine, while at the same time they keep before the reader the advantages of staying with the class in which one is born, as against a rash attempt to realize an equality never intended by our original nature. True citizenship may be in the development of the individual first, of the family next, of the state last.

"GOLDEN TREASURY," PART IV

The remarks on this book are based upon the historical fact that almost all of the poems considered were composed in the first thirty years of the nineteenth century, and were the work of about six men of might, and that the rest of the poems are nobly worthy of the high company of the great six. The thirty years are those of Wordsworth, Scott, Shelley, Byron, Keats, and Campbell. Campbell I include for two reasons—the first, that I have a personal love of his verse, and second, that it may be well to draw attention to the endless difficulty of settling a table of precedence for singers so great as were all these. What is said of the work of one might, with propriety, *mutatis mutandis*, be said of another's song.

First, then, the glory of the unattainable in poetry teaches the value

of humility. To bring this home, it has been advocated that we should encourage the making of verse by those who study poetry.

Second, the number of the writers who have achieved renown encourages all of us forward and upward.

Third, the width of their appeal expands our sympathy with theme and person; their respect for and celebration of so many aspects of human nature, may show the student that he may actually respect himself at his best, that he, in very fact, has a better selfhood, one truly and objectively worthy of honor and high celebration by the bards of the race. Secrecy enshrouds it, for the most part, but that does not lessen its reality. The cocoanuts of life are not its violets. Stones may preach sermons on ideals. Ideals are as true as pavements and as worth while as salaries.

A simple list of some of the subjects which form the series in "Golden Treasury, IV," will urge these points further. Their urgency is the excuse for quoting the exact page from the edition before me, London, 1900:

"The Education of Nature" (Wordsworth), page 209; "To the Evening Star" (Campbell), page 218; "Degenerate Douglas" (Wordsworth), page 283; "To the Night" (Shelley), page 219; "London, 1802" (Wordsworth), page 242; "Simon Lee" (Wordsworth), page 248; "To a Skylark" (Shelley), page 274; "Ode to a Nightingale" (Keats), page 279; "Ruth: Or the Influences of Nature" (Wordsworth), page 313; "Written Among the Euganean Hills" (Shelley), page 320.

May I cite a single poem?

O friend! I know not which way I must look
For comfort, being, as I am, opprest
To think that now our life is only drest
For show; mean handy-work of craftsman, cook,

Or groom!—We must run glittering like a brook
In the open sunshine, or we are unblest;
The wealthiest man among us is the best:
No grandeur now in nature or in book

Delights us. Rapine, avarice, expense,
This is idolatry; and these we adore:
Plain living and high thinking are no more:

The homely beauty of the good old cause
Is gone; our peace, our fearful innocence,
And pure religion breathing household laws.

In spite of the lavish love of Nature that even in this very sonnet shows in Wordsworth's allusion to "grandeur" in "nature," the moment he comes to the greater theme of Man and his living, as he approaches it in these lines, he does not scruple to use the beauty of the "glittering brook" as a thing despicable. In this one incisive stroke we have a lesson in values. And tremendous values are set in the theme of the sonnet—"The wealthiest man among us is the best."